

Organization: Van Alen Institute

Title: Executive Director

Reports to: Board of Trustees

Location: New York, NY

Website: <https://www.vanalen.org/>

To apply: Please send resume and cover letter to VAIED@pbrsearch.com

Van Alen Institute seeks a visionary, strategic executive director to lead the organization into a vibrant, dynamic, and sustainable future.

Background

Van Alen Institute is a nonprofit that uses design to catalyze positive change in cities, landscapes, and regions. By collaborating with and convening design professionals, scholars, policymakers, and communities, Van Alen investigates the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges – and how the built environment can play a role in solving them.

Originally founded in 1894 as an independent architectural organization, Van Alen encourages design professionals to examine their collective role in shaping the world we live in, and in how they can improve people’s lives. Operating with a budget of \$2M and a staff of 20, Van Alen carries out its mission through three main areas of focus: provocative public programs, inventive design competitions, and cross-disciplinary research.

Van Alen sees its role as an instigator, a convener, a thought partner, and a catalyst that mobilizes professionals in various sectors – from design practitioners to urban researchers – to take an interdisciplinary approach to advance creative thinking and effect change. Read about some of Van Alen’s projects [here](#).

Position

Van Alen Institute seeks a visionary and strategic executive director to work closely with the board, staff, council members, and other stakeholders to define, manage and implement plans to ensure the organization’s future. The ED will serve as a leader, fundraiser, and connector, and be the face and voice of Van Alen for local, national, and global audiences. The ED will cultivate partnerships and funder relationships with business and nonprofit leaders as well as provide leadership and management to staff, ensuring that people are actively collaborating to serve the overarching mission of Van Alen – and that its programs, competitions, research initiatives, and other activities leverage and amplify one another.

In addition, the ED will be a creative force aware of best practices and innovations in the field of nonprofit organizations and will draw on that knowledge to ensure that Van Alen is a vibrant, forward-thinking and -acting organization.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Work with the board and staff to create Van Alen’s next strategic plan. Key goals:
 - Clearly define Van Alen’s mission and work, providing a judicious lens for decision-making on the kinds of activities Van Alen should – and shouldn’t – engage in.
 - Promote and publicize the organization’s work to attract donors and partners.
 - Take a strategic approach to integrating research, competitions, and public programs in a thematic way, creating a dynamic, synergistic whole.
 - Lead, manage, mentor, inspire, and retain high-quality staff and oversee the implementation of best practices across the organization.
- Effectively communicate the goals of the strategic plan both internally and externally so that all stakeholders understand their role and responsibility in making the plan a reality.
- With emotional intelligence, become a valued and visible member of the architecture and design communities locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, with the ability to engage with people from a wide array of backgrounds, disciplines, and interest levels.
- Engage with and mobilize those who care about Van Alen, including [International](#), [Climate](#), and [Program Leadership](#) Councils, volunteers, funders, partners, committee and community members, and board members.
- In collaboration with the board, the managing director, and the senior leadership team, ensure the fiscal and operational health of the organization.
- Lead and manage the staff so they are inspired to do exceptional work; be a positive and accessible presence.
- Support staff in their careers, ensuring people have opportunities for professional development that enhance their growth and their work.

Fundraising

- Leverage the endowment of the organization to ensure its sustainability.
- Working closely with the board and staff, raise general operating and restricted support from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government sources.
- Strategize ways to grow development capacity and diversify funding sources.
- Effectively leverage volunteer leadership to further build support for Van Alen.
- Drive council membership to bolster the visibility and financial health of the organization.

Communications

- Effectively communicate Van Alen’s mission and initiatives to raise visibility. Serve as an enthusiastic ambassador for Van Alen, seeking to engage with a wide range of people, such as business and civic leaders, scholars and academics, public policy and elected officials, leaders in other organizations (including those outside of architecture and design), communities, and the media.
- Bolster internal communication across the organization so that staff members are cross-collaborating and sharing information in productive ways.
- Ensure staff members understand how their specific roles contribute to the overarching mission and purpose of the organization.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will be a strategic, creative leader with a passion for the mission of Van Alen and the ability to imagine its promising future. Specifically, the executive director will have:

- At least ten years of executive management experience with a track record of motivating results-oriented teams.
- Integrity, idealism, a sense of humor, a positive attitude, a mission-centric orientation, and self-directed work style.
- Engagement in the worlds of architecture and design with the ability to leverage relationships with multidisciplinary practitioners and professionals for Van Alen's benefit.
- Solid fundraising experience with the ability to cultivate relationships and to close contributions from all revenue sources.
- Emotional intelligence, a winning personality, and the desire to engage with people from various disciplines and backgrounds.
- Excellent management and interpersonal skills and experience leading a highly capable and collaborative staff in ways that emphasize teamwork and growth.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills and a persuasive and passionate communication style.
- A comfort with complexity and the ability to drive multidisciplinary projects forward.
- Track record of working with a board of trustees with the ability to expand existing and develop new board member relationships.
- Passion for the work of the Van Alen. Unwavering commitment to high-quality programs and program evaluation, competitions, and research.
- Familiarity with New York City desirable.
- A bachelor's degree with an advanced degree in a related field preferred.

Van Alen Institute seeks to recruit and retain the most talented people from a diverse candidate pool. Van Alen is committed to inclusivity and diversity, where equal employment opportunities are available to all applicants without regard to race, color, religious affiliation and beliefs, sex, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, military and veteran status, and any other characteristic protected by applicable law.